

The State Dictionary
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AFRICAN COLONIZATION;

WHAT IS IT?

This question, in the views of many, may seem almost superfluous—scarcely needing a serious answer. A little inquiry, however, into the condition of the subject, will discover that a most strange diversity of feeling is often excited by the mere mention of Colonization in Africa.

The most important parties concerned in this difference of opinion, are the various Christian denominations on the one side, and nearly the whole colored population on the other. It is usual for colored men when assembled in convention, whether for religious, educational, or for political purposes, to seek occasion, at some stage of their business, to pass resolutions denouncing Colonization; while, on the contrary, this same enterprise is warmly recommended by numerous ecclesiastical bodies throughout the country, as one of the most benevolent institutions of the age.

From the number and reputation of those involved in this controversy, pro and con, it would appear that the subject itself presents very different aspects to those differing in opinion respecting its merit and utility.

The second Article in the Constitution of the American Colonization Society, to say the least, gives but a limited definition of what is now considered the object of Colonization. The governmental proviso, contained in said Article is inoperative, and it always has been so;

yet owing to the presence of this clause, or the misapprehension of it, all the odium usually attached to a compulsory measure is reflected on the Society, while the great mass of Colonizationists, on the contrary, are actuated in their labors by a strict regard to a purely voluntary principle.

With the best intentions, some persons, in attempting to advocate the cause, have failed clearly to express the sentiments of many of its friends. They have used arguments and presented motives which detracted from its merits, and excited prejudices that need never have existed.

It has been reported of Colonization that it aims to expatriate the colored people of the Northern States; that it would expel from the Southern States all free colored persons, in order to rivet more firmly the chains of those in bondage; and that at best, it is an abortive effort to remove slavery from this country. Such a description of the character and purposes of Colonization is disclaimed by its friends; and yet it is not surprising, in these times of party contention and misrepresentation, that such disparaging reports should be circulated, and partly believed, especially by the colored people themselves, who are so earnestly engaged in securing their rights and interests in this country that any change of location, however desirable to them under other circumstances, might now seem, by a forced construction, to be incompatible with their efforts at self elevation here.

Until recently, the settlement of Liberia has been considered only an experiment; and in passing through its incipient stages, as in the case of most other new enterprises, things may have occasionally transpired which, in the hands of opponents, or of injudicious friends, have been used prejudicially. It has occurred in isolated

eases, that inferior motives for Colonization have been urged by irresponsible persons. Their unwise sayings were seized upon, and so exaggerated and reiterated by objectors, as to hide from view those great and good results contemplated by the Christian Church.

It is sometimes alleged, that among Colonizationists there are persons who would deny to the colored man a home of freedom in this country, who would oppose efforts to improve his condition here, and who, by their speeches, have increased the prejudice against the people of color.

On this point there is less reason for complaint than is often supposed; but admitting the charge to be partly true, in order to continue the argument, it certainly cannot be considered fair to judge the cause by the conduct and casual expressions of such persons, when sentiments to the contrary are openly declared by large numbers of the Christian public, who justly claim to understand what is the true spirit of Colonization. They prosecute the enterprise (at much expense to themselves) with a sincere desire to benefit Africa and her descendants in this country. The inhabitants of Africa are included with those dwelling in this country, because true philanthropy would seek to benefit the many millions *there* as willingly as aid the four millions *here*, especially that in so doing it is honestly believed that in laboring to elevate Africa, her children, wherever found, will share in the benefits. Perhaps most of the misunderstanding on this whole subject has arisen from the fact that one class of persons are looking solely to the rights and interests of colored persons in this land, while another class think that sympathy should be awakened for the entire colored race, and that measures should be actively prosecuted commensurate with the interest of *all*, wherever found.

On this important subject it is desirable to have the hearty co-operation of all good men, whether white or colored; and difficult as may appear the task to secure unanimity, owing to the present contradictory views prevailing through this country respecting the interests of the colored population, it may not be an impossible thing to combine all those who sincerely desire the greatest amount of good, temporal and spiritual, to accrue to the whole colored race, particularly as nearly all Christian denominations have defined their position on the question, and recorded the same in documents well authenticated.

There is a class of persons inclined to disregard opinions emanating from ecclesiastical sources, who have more zeal in detecting supposed discrepancies than in harmonizing what is good in the Church, and of applying it for the removal of evils from the world. From their peculiar constitution, little aid should be expected from them in efforts to harmonize views on the subject of Colonization.

In answering the question "WHAT IS AFRICAN COLONIZATION?" the friends of the cause cheerfully refer to the action of the Christian public on the subject, as fully expressing their views. And when those who adopt a given cause as their own, publicly express their opinions of it, such an expression should be ever received as defining the spirit and design of the cause itself. The following brief extracts indicate the sentiments extensively held on the subject now under consideration. The dates on which the resolutions were originally adopted are given, yet these testimonials have been renewed from year to year subsequently, by the same religious bodies re-affirming their former action. So numerous and ample have been their cordial expressions on this subject, that

a full collection of them, with similar commendations from many other ecclesiastical bodies, would fill a good sized volume.

Philadelphia Baptist Association.—Oct. 6, 1854.

“Whereas, the existence of the Republic of Liberia furnishes peculiar facilities for the evangelization of numerous tribes (in Africa) who, like the Karens in Asia, are stretching forth their hands for the Word of Life; therefore,

“*Resolved*, That we have heard with much pleasure the cheering statements * * * of the Pennsylvania Colonization Society in reference to the success which is attending the efforts of the Society, * * * * * and we commend the cause * * * to the confidence and co-operation of the churches of the Association.”

General Synod of the Ref. Protestant Dutch Church, in North America.—June, 1849.

“*Resolved*, That the value of the Colonization enterprise, as conservative of the peace and harmony of our country, as adapted practically to meliorate the condition of the free people of color, as auxiliary to the missionary work in Africa, and as the most effective and economical agency for suppressing the slave trade, has been eminently manifested in the events of the past year.”

Synod of the German Reformed Church:

Meeting in Greensburg, Pa., May 26, 1854.

“*Resolved*, That in the opinion of this Synod, the cause of African Colonization, comprehending, as it does, the interests of two races and two continents, but more especially as it relates to the colonization and Christianization of Africa, it demands the serious consideration and co-operation of every philanthropist and lover of Christ's kingdom.”

*Philadelphia Conference of the Methodist Epis. Church :
March 30, 1853.*

“ *Resolved*, That we regard with increasing favor the cause of African Colonization.

“ *Resolved*, That in view of the wide field of usefulness and urgent demand for intelligent and Christian colonists in the various departments of true missionary work in Africa, * * * we commend the missionary aspects of Colonization to the benevolent regard of our congregations.”

Pennsylvania Episcopal Convention.—May, 1856.

In his annual address the Bishop says :

“ In connection with our African Mission, which seems to be conducted with great wisdom and zeal, the colony of Liberia is richly entitled to our sympathy and aid. Nothing is more likely to promote the diffusion of Christianity and civilization on that hitherto ill-fated continent; nor is anything more likely to react favorably on the condition and prospects of our own colored population, than such an enlargement and improvement of the Republic as shall make it an attractive home to our Africo-American people, and as an object of respect and esteem to the surrounding natives.”

*General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, (O. S.)
May, 1848.*

“ *Resolved*, That the enterprise of the Colonization Society, so successfully prosecuted amid so much obloquy, opposition and misunderstanding, has our highest confidence, as wise, peaceful, humane and philanthropic.

“ *Resolved*, That as it has been in past years repeatedly commended to the patronage of the churches in our connection, as pre-eminently combining the noblest benefits to Africa and America, to the emigrant colonists, and to the heathen tribes around them, we would again offer it to their patronage, and most earnestly recommend

to all pastors and churches an annual collection for its support, to be made early in July.

“*Resolved*, That we have heard with the highest pleasure of the complete destruction of the slave factories near Liberia, and most earnestly hope for the day when a traffic so odious and cruel shall be swept from the ocean.”

*General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, (N. S.)
May, 1853.*

“*Resolved*, That the original project of Colonization, so far as it proposed to introduce civilization, free government, and Christianity among the people of Africa, merits, as it has already received, the cordial approbation and friendly sympathy of the Presbyterian Church.

“*Resolved*, That as Christians and Americans, we look with delight upon the success already achieved, in the rescue of more than five hundred miles of sea-coast from the manifold crimes and miseries which the slave trade inflicted upon it, and in the successful organization and administration of republican government by the emigrants to Liberia, thus triumphantly vindicating their capacity for the highest duties of society.”

*Board of Managers of the Penna Colonization Society:
Sept. 9, 1856.*

“Whereas, it is frequently and erroneously charged, that African Colonization has mainly for its object the mere transportation of the colored race from this country; therefore,

“*Resolved*, That in assisting those who choose to emigrate to Liberia, it is our earnest desire to advance their interest and usefulness in their new home; and to furnish, by such emigrations, what is believed to be one of the best agencies, under God, for civilizing and Christianizing Africa.”

Similar views of Colonization are entertained by the religious emigrants themselves in their distant homes. Among numerous resolutions to the point, adopted by their various ecclesiastical bodies, the following may be considered a fair specimen of the whole :

“Whereas, it has pleased Almighty God, in his wise providence, to cast our lot upon these dark and benighted shores, as we believe for wise and excellent purposes; and believing it to be our duty to unite our efforts to spread the gospel of the blessed Jesus among the poor benighted heathen around us, as well as to sustain the churches connected with this body, which may be destitute of a regular ministry, have united ourselves into a Society, etc.”

[Here follows the Constitution of the Liberian Domestic Missionary Society.]

Again, further on in the minutes :

“*Resolved*, That the third Sabbath in March, annually, be set apart as a day of fasting and prayer, for the benefit of the heathen around us, whose condition we greatly deplore.” * * * * *

“May the churches in Liberia have the subject of Missions often brought before them; as daily observation teaches us that the great Head of the Church has not placed us upon these shores to be idle spectators of the wretchedness and degradation of our brethren, our kinsmen according to the flesh, but, on the contrary, to be instrumental in raising up a people here to praise the Lord.”

The substance of the foregoing extracts, reduced to propositions, fairly teach that the objects of Colonization are,

1st. To establish a new Republic in Africa, through the agency of colored persons from this country who wish to settle in Liberia.

2d. To diffuse the blessings of civilization and Christianity among the numerous tribes of benighted Africa.

3d. To put an end to the slave trade, now practised on the unprotected natives of Africa.

These are the prevailing views of the Christian public on the subject of Colonization, and constitute the platform on which they prosecute their labors in the enterprise. Opposition to this cause, therefore, is opposition to one branch of Foreign Missions—to the spread of republican principles on a foreign soil—to the civilization of poor, barbarous men—and to the annihilation of the cruel slave trade.

Yet, notwithstanding all opposition, Liberia continues to rise in honor and power, and is gradually shedding a most healthful influence through Western Africa, that will finally secure the redemption of millions who would otherwise die in darkness and idolatry. We believe that God is guiding this young republic to a high and holy destiny.

Less than forty years have passed away since the ship Elizabeth, from the port of New York, bore to the western shores of Africa the sturdy little band who formed the nucleus of the Liberian colony. They were men of nerve and noble spirit, worthy to be named with those who first planted the seeds of republican principles on the wild shores of North America, just two hundred years before their day. From the time that this handful of our colored countrymen first trod the soil of Africa, until this hour, the work which they commenced has steadily advanced. Ten thousand have followed in their footsteps, spreading the light of Christian civilization where formerly dwelt alone the vilest idolatry, the grossest superstitions, and all the horrors of the cruel slave trade. Five hundred

miles of sea-coast have been redeemed from pagan desecration ; and where once stood the slave factory and the shrine of idols, may now be seen the hall of science, the court of justice, and the sanctuary for worshippers of the true God. Where nature once was left in all her wildness, hundreds of well-cultivated farms are now appearing ; while on every hand neat villages are springing up, formed after the model of our own. More than two hundred thousand natives, won by the attractions of civilization, have taken up their abode on the Liberian territory to learn the modes of living a better life.

To mould this mass of human mind, and make it available for future good, is now one great aim of the young republic. Hence schools are everywhere established ; a college has just been founded ; scores of Christian churches, with more than fifty gospel ministers, are steadily engaged, diffusing far and near the blessings of salvation, by means of the pulpit, the Sabbath school, and the religious press.

The finger of prophecy has inscribed a bright future for Liberia. On her the sun of righteousness seems to have arisen with unusual splendor. Nowhere in Christendom do the truths of divine revelation exert a more direct influence ; nowhere on heathen soil can be found more hopeful evidence of success in the work of the gospel.

In tracing the glorious career of the United States of America we never forget the "Forefathers ;" their memory is dear to their descendants and to the world. So will it be with Liberia. As successive generations arise in that growing republic, and long after its founders shall have slept in the dust of ages, the memories of Lott Carey, Elijah Johnson, of Roberts and Benson, of Yates and Crummell, and of many other early Liberians,

will be fondly recalled, and they honored as the chief agents in demonstrating to the world, by their own noble efforts, the truth of the problem that "the colored man is competent for self-government," and more, that he can ESTABLISH AND PERPETUATE A GOVERNMENT WHICH SHALL WIN THE ADMIRATION OF THE WORLD.

C. BROWN.

Philadelphia, 1857.

NOTE.—The physical resources of Western Africa—the commercial advantages of Liberia—and other important pecuniary inducements, usually presented as encouragements to enterprising settlers, are matters fully appreciated by the writer, although not discussed in the foregoing pages; the present object being simply to exhibit the religious element, which enters so deeply into the action of Colonization.

